



IMPLEMENTATION ASPECTS OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAM IN CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION SCHOOLS

Dr. Priyanka Behrani

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, The Maharaja Sayaji Rao University of Baroda.

ABSTRACT

Education is preparing child to life effectively in the contemporary society. Societies change over time and are not same at any point of time. The traditional system of education can no more provide inputs to lead life for the kinds of complexities that have developed as a result of increasing complexities in contemporary societies. Life Skills Education is suggested by many as a prevention and development approach to cope with this present complex scenario of life. According to the WHO [1997], internalising the core essential life skills helps the adolescents to deal with the concerns in the modern world in a dignified and mature way bringing success to them.'Life skills are skills, strengths and capabilities that help individuals face problems of their everyday life with a positive attitude and go about with their everyday tasks effectively.'(Joseph, 2008). The World Health Organization also felt the need to introduce these skills through education programs in the children who are future citizens of the society. Understanding the need to equip children with these life skills schools have expressed a need to develop life skills education programs as part of curriculum at different levels of schooling process. Therefore, various boards of education are now supporting implementation of life skill education programmes in the schools from upper primary stage to higher secondary stage in different modes. The objective of this paper is to 1. To study the Life Skills Education Programs in CBSE schools. 2. To study the problems of teachers and administrators in implementation of life skills education programs.

The sample of the study was the 7 schools in Gujarat affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education. Data was collected by semi structured interview. Content analysis was done to analyze the data.

KEYWORDS: Life skills Education, Adolescence, Problems in implementation,

Introduction

Today's education system is lopsided as it provides more of knowledge related concepts than skill, attitude and value oriented education. Looking into the needs of present day complicated life we need more than simple knowledge. Knowledge which is not put to practical application is of no use. Reports of commissions and committees on education are pointing towards this lack of emphasis on training aspect and process aspect in the present day education system. We need more of skills to put into use to lead life than other aspects. Developing these skills needs to occupy an important aspect of teaching learning process. These skills are of varied nature, like, soft skills, communication skills, techno-savvy skills, info-savvy skills, techno-pedagogy skills, spiritual skills, research skills and life skills at large. 'Life skills are skills, strengths and capabilities that help individuals face problems of their everyday life with a positive attitude and go about with their everyday tasks effectively.' (Joseph, 2008) Understanding the need to equip children with these life skills schools has expressed a need to develop life skills education programs as part of curriculum at different levels of schooling process.

Hamburg 1990 defined life skills training as teaching of skills for survival, living with others and succeeding in a complex society. Nelson Jones (1993) states that life skills are personally responsible sequences of self help choices in specific psychological skills areas conducive to mental wellness. People require a repertoire of life skills according to their developmental tasks and specific problems of living. WHO identified the core life skills and provided meaning accordingly as follows. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life. Basing on theoretical perspectives and various programs organized in different social settings ten core sets of general life skills were identified across each culture for promotion of psychological health in children and adolescents. These skills are, decision making, problem solving, empathy, self awareness, communication, interpersonal relationships, coping with emotions, coping with stress, creative thinking and critical thinking. (Vandra, 2011)

According to CBSE Teachers' Manual for Life Skills Education, Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well being and competence in young people as they face realities of life. They are generally applied in the context of health and social events. They are broadly categorized under three categories, thinking skills, social skills and emotional skills. World Health Organization (WHO)[1997] defines life skills as, 'the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.'

Need of life skills for Adolescents

Adolescence is the most critical phase of an individual. It denotes the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood marked by conspicuous physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. The inbuilt taboos existing in the society in the form of control and support from the near and dear ones guide the adolescents to

grow into a mature adult. Lifestyles have changed due to globalization and technology invasion in day to day affairs in a big way. The highly competitive world of today and the absence of traditional norms and support have heightened the stress among adolescents resulting in multiple mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, diffidence, anger, confliction in interpersonal relationship and failure.(Smith et al. 2004)

According to CBSE Manual for teachers' on Life Skills Education, adolescence is a critical period for the development of self-identity. The process of acquiring a sense of self is linked to physiological changes and also learning to negotiate the social and psychological demands of being young adults. Responsible handling of issues like independence, intimacy and peer group dependence are concerns that need to be recognized and appropriately support needs to be given to cope with them.

According to Program on Mental Health, Life Skills Education in Schools, Division of Mental Health and Prevention of Substance Abuse, World Health Organization, 1994, Life skills education programs in schools are important because of the following reasons:

Psychosocial competence is a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behavior while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment. Psychosocial competence has an important role to play in the promotion of health in its broadest sense; in terms of physical, mental and social well-being. In particular, where health problems are related to behavior, and where the behavior is related to an inability to deal effectively with stresses and pressures in life, the enhancement of psychosocial competence could make an important contribution. Schools are the places where an individual gets opportunities to interact with people from different social strata, values, traditions and beliefs. This is the place where a person learns about rules and regulations of the society. If awareness about concepts of life skills is provided in integrated manner to students in schools, it will help them to deal with complex social situations in later life with required maturity and composure. Therefore the need to take up these concepts in schools was thought of and implemented in the form life skills education in schools.

CBSE after eight years research introduced "Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation" at IX & X class during 2010 with grading system. The CCE is school based evaluation of students that covers all aspects of student's development. The evaluation and assessment is based on various areas as described in CBSE Teacher's Manual in three parts (CBSE Teacher's Manual page No. 20 & 21), where part-2 consists of Co-scholastic Area in two parts:

2A: Life Skills (Thinking Skills, Social Skills and Emotional Skills) &

2B: Attitudes and values (towards Teacher, School mates, School Activities,

Environment & Value system).

However, the present study is focusing on the implementation aspects of these programs in secondary schools. Life skills awareness is more needed and relevant for the stage specific growth needs of adolescents. Boards of education are implementing these programs with a format set for different standards at secondary level. The teaching learning process is expected to be integrated most of the times and the skills needs to be assessed basing on the behavior rather than on quantitative aspects. As these programs are mandatory for schools to implement, the curriculum needs to include inputs related to these skills within the given set of time and other resources limitations. This may increase the pressure on schools as many schools are still lacking in basic facilities to conduct these studies. In this scenario, what kinds of problems are faced by administrators and teacher to implement these programs successfully must also form the part of research. If these problems are studied and understood properly future programs can be fine tuned with required modifications. So the present study is focusing on this aspect in schools of secondary level in Baroda city.

The objective of this paper is to

1. To study the Life Skills Education Programs in CBSE schools.
2. To study the problems of teachers and administrators in implementation of life skills education programs.

Methodology:

The present study was a survey where the purpose was to study the life skills education programs in CBSE schools in Gujarat and study the problems of teachers and administrators in its implementation. The study was conducted with the following methodology

Sample:

Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. The sample consisted of 7 schools in Gujarat affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education The location was in Oonjha, Anand, Ahmedabad, Bhuj, Karjan and Vadodara.

Administrators were 8 principals, 8 coordinators of secondary section and 16 subject teachers who were trained in imparting life skills.

Tools:

A semi structured interview schedule was prepared for collecting information on the implementation and problems faced in its implementation separately for teachers and administrators. The interview schedule had 11 questions regarding the basic information about life skills, its usefulness, method of implementation, training in life skills, problems faced in implementing, need for further training and problems in evaluation.

Procedure for data collection: First the permission was sort from the school authorities to collect the information. The school principals who agreed to be the part of the study were approached at their convenient time. Consent form was filled and signed by the participants. Principals of the schools, coordinators and teachers were interviewed individually.

Analysis of the data was done using content analysis.

Results and discussion:

Data was analyzed through content analysis and interpretation of the results obtained. In order to meet the requirement, a sequential method of data analysis is followed objective-wise.

Objective 1: To study the Life Skills Education Programs in CBSE schools.

- Teachers' Manual developed by CBSE for the purpose of implementation of life skills education programs in schools for Standard IX and X was considered as guidelines for these programs. Ideas and expressions from the manual regarding various aspects, like, meaning of LSE, objectives of LSE, expectations from teachers, teaching learning methods and assessment methods. The analysis is presented here point wise.
- 1. The approach that is being followed by CBSE is to provide accurate, objective and scientific knowledge keeping in mind that the content should be age-appropriate and directed towards the sensitivity of young minds. The process of transfer is made simpler through the KAVELS approach – Knowledge Attitude Value Enhanced Life Skills
- 2. Integration of life skills in text books -
- One way to impart life skills is by emphasizing the importance of a particular life skill in the text, to create awareness among young students about life skills.
- The second way to incorporate life skills in text books is to include a few meaningful questions or activities in the text.
- It is hoped that the schools will adopt an interdisciplinary approach for transacting the curriculum of life skills education through the curriculum

plus mode. Components of life skills are also integrated in the formal modes of learning such as language textbooks, science textbooks and social science textbooks. However, it is more important to promote life skills through informal approach and in an activity mode.

3. Participatory teaching methods like, class discussions, brainstorming, demonstration and guided practice, role play, small groups, educational games and simulations, case studies, storytelling, debates, practicing life skills specific to a particular context with others, audio and visual activities like arts, music, theatre, dance and decision mapping or problem trees. Activities are merely suggestive and a resourceful teacher can definitely think of many more activities to promote particular life skill.
4. Assessment includes different tests / scales / inventories that indicate the degree and direction of weakness of skills in students. These assessment practices should not be judgmental or response-biased.

Analysis of the above suggestions on life skills education resulted in following conclusions about these programs to be taken up in CBSE schools.

- A clear mention was made by all the participants of the study about training about life skills .The clarity of concept; usefulness to teachers as well as students was accepted.
- Life skills approach is student centered participatory process of learning and applying new skills in a supportive classroom environment.
- This approach has reinforced existing educational programs as it involves experiential learning process following a constructivist approach to learning.
- Participatory teaching methods were spelled out. It was also expected that teachers could design activities according to their contextual requirement to develop life skills.
- Some teachers reported that by taking life skills sessions the students relate to them better and developed better interpersonal teacher student relationship.
- There are three different time schedules the schools employed. one school introduced life skills education during morning assembly/prayer time ,rest used last two periods or any two periods post recess and integrated life skills with the subject periods using the life skills education methodology and focusing the identified skills. It was dependent on the teachers comfort level.
- Approach to this education is based on age specific activities providing knowledge through KAVELS approach.
- Specific content areas in education were also identified to include activities related to life skills. This would help in designing activities in integrated approach.
- Teachers shared that most of the decisions about the children are taken by elders and thus they do not develop decision making skill this limitation restricts their personality and lack of self confidence. The training on life skills helps them develop healthy problem solving strategies and critical thinking skills.
- The teachers were over enthused by their experience of conducting life skills class as they could not believe that students could be so active and think on their own to come out with some creative answers.
- Ten life skills identified by WHO were grouped under three core groups, as, thinking skills, social skills and emotional skills. The activities developed for each group helps in developing these skills in combination.
- Assessment modes were expected to be of qualitative nature. Judgmental and subjective ways/tests were not proposed at any stage of assessment.

Objective 2: To study the problems of teachers and administrators in implementation of life skills education programs.

Questions were asked on management of programs, facilities provided for the program, training needs of teachers and problems faced from various angles. The ideas expressed by principals and administrators from different schools were presented here point wise.

- Ideas expressed by administrators were in line with the opinions expressed in manual. They felt that life skills help students to be self confident and self supportive in leading life.
- Different ways of management and implementation of these programs were given out. Schools, subject experts and field workers were involved at different levels. However, it is co-operative venture involving all people to

finally implement the activity in classrooms to educate learners.

Different infrastructure facilities like labs, auditorium, play fields, audio-visual equipment were provided by school. Making arrangements for trips and street plays was the responsibility of school management. If activity is done by students in class, then it is their responsibility to procure resources.

- Financial burden was shared by schools mostly. Individual activities were left to the students to procure resources of specific activity. Trips, activities outside the school were the main responsibility of school and management. In a way parents were also sharing the burden in activity like school cinema.
- Responsibility to provide for all requirements of teachers was lying with core committees, school and teachers.
- Problems with implementation mentioned were -
- Time required for conducting these activities, teacher preparation and evaluation of students by teachers were identified as main problems identified from teachers.
- Few teachers were unaware of different modes of introducing life skills programs.
- Teacher requires preparation to assimilate LSE in curriculum.
- Academic burden and extracurricular activities made students feel these activities were extra load on them. Proper time allotment in time table was to be followed.
- Varied opinions were given out. However, parents are not interested and less supportive, but strong opposition was not mentioned.
- Requires patience and guidance by teachers sometimes less comfortable to an authoritarian style teacher.
- The discomfort towards the evaluation of life skills education as it is the part of continuous compressive evaluation, CCE .
- Need for Annual training sessions were shared by few participants.
- The responses for the problems faced by individual teachers are listed below

1. Self

- a) There is a time limitation for course completion which cannot be ignored so teachers said because of this "I generally used to assess these life skills only through competitions."
- b) There is also the time constraint for taking them to various organizations to make them sensitize to the real problems.
- c) Since life skill class is once a week it is difficult to conduct a lot of activities.
- d) In spite of the training face problems in evaluating the social and emotional skills. "I feel sometimes my evaluation is very subjective and these skills are immeasurable.
- e) Students do the research work and personally too they have to do lot of research work to explain the concept.
- f) Due to proxy and too many responsibilities some teachers reported they cannot handle these activities with full devotion and satisfaction.

2. School:

- a) The period allotted for this may be used for other activities if there is a true constraint. Infrastructure and atmosphere and equipment.
- b) Arrangement made for these activities

3. Students:

- a) They do not do it seriously and with interest as it is not a graded subject.
- b) Student absenteeism and some students have a very casual and laid back approach towards the case studies etc.,
- c) the students are not interested subject so do not participate in the activities because of which some of them disturbed in the ongoing class.
- d) Students scared to assess themselves which results in that they do not aware of themselves, their weakness and strengths. As once they participate, they may get awareness of themselves;
- e) Most students tend to avoid the assessment of their life skills as they do not participate actively in these activities.

- f) As it is new for the students they lack self confidence, interest is not there. New for the students thus they were little bit confused and did not have confidence while conducting activities.
- g) Not all the students are showing their willingness towards such problems,
- h) Not self motivated
- i) Take time to adopt
- j) They get to have leadership quality, coordination and cooperation among themselves.
- k) Too much burden of academic studies. It is made interdisciplinary for that.

4. Parents –

- a) often unaware of its presence in the curriculum,
- b) Not interested as it is not graded.
- c) Less supportive.
- d) most parents always give first preference to their wards academics than life skills development,
- e) Don't take their wards responsibilities and feel all responsibility is of school.
- 5. Any other –

 - a) CBSE should develop strict guidelines for the conduction of different activities like quiz in different areas.
 - b) In each city organization of debate, group discussion and extempore competition by CBSE is expected, above these expectations are lacking.

Discussion :

this study delved deeper into understanding the ground reality of implementation of life skills education in CBSE schools . Administrators and teachers inputs were sought to obtain the holistic picture .Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.(WHO 2008).

Life skills education programs were found to be improving mental health of adolescents (BharathSrikala, 2010) and prevention of violence in adolescents through improving positive skills. (Drishti Sharma, 2014); life skills education programs improves general health level of students was the finding of Mohammad, 2009 research. Study of Nileena showed that life skills training improved confidence to take decisions to avoid risky behavior in students. Sandhya, 2012 indicated that self concept and core life skills knowledge are closely related and develop self confidence in adolescents. Pooja, 2009 revealed that impact of life skills training is positive on self-esteem, adjustment and empathy among adolescents. Life skills survey of department of education and skills, 2014 revealed positive impact on schools in improving general health of students. With the same intention CBSE provided guidelines to take up life skills education programmes in schools to improve personality and behaviour of secondary students. The objectives of Life Skills Education programmes, teaching learning methods followed and assessment practices mentioned are in line with the guidelines proposed by CBSE.

Schools are providing training to teachers following the guidelines proposed by CBSE on teaching learning and assessment practices of the Life Skills education programmes. Training support to teachers was also highlighted by the Pauline Rose, 2012. Parental and community support was sought in curriculum development to gain their support in using life skills to reduce HIV/AIDS risk. (Pauline, 2012) Methodology and teaching of life skills training was recommended by Manwa, 2012. Quality and teacher capacity were identified as main issues for effective delivery of the programs by Lineo, 2005 study. Teachers are provided with the materials from CBSE and training organizations and even school is developing worksheets and materials for taking up activities for Life Skills Education. John, 2014 study indicated that more in-service training programs are needed for teachers to properly understand and implement the programs.

Schools are following qualitative assessment practices basing on the performance of individual and group activities and providing marks on the basis of criteria set up prior to implementation of activities. Class discussions, role play, using practical activities were followed most in mentioned teaching methods to implement life skills education programmes. Schools are following the innovative practices in teaching learning practices as per guidelines of CBSE. No special ideas and inputs were mentioned. As mentioned in early paragraphs, teacher training and awareness related to assessment also needs to be the focus. Development of innovative programs by schools on their own is the serious gap in life skills education program implementation as seen from the findings.

Time constraints, lack of proper training to grasp the ideas of CBSE to implement programmes, evaluation of qualitative skills like, social and emotional aspects, lack of students interest due to fear, lack of confidence and academic burden, improper arrangements, improper time slots, burden of proxy classes and extracurricular activities, lack of strict action against faulty schools were some of the problems mentioned for successful implementation. Nileena study also showed that separate time allotment for this education is not there in CBSE

schools. Inadequate teaching learning resources, lack of training to teachers on different aspects of life skills teaching and evaluation, and low level of preparedness of teachers and school managers were some identified problems of Abobo's study. Gender factors were found to be negatively affecting the teaching learning of life skills for students of Kenyan schools(Agnes, 2013).

In conclusions it can suggested that for proper teacher preparedness, developing interest in parents, proper rules and regulations for implementation should be included for further strengthening the programs. Life skills-based education succeeds or fails based upon teaching quality. Given this, there is an urgent need to provide quality training and ongoing support to life skills teachers and instructors. When above suggestions are taken up seriously, development of proper programs with cost effectiveness and success may come up.

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